



1998–99 CATS ASSESSMENT

Open-Response Item Scoring Worksheet

Grade 11—Social Studies

The **academic expectation** addressed by “Formal and Informal Groups” is

2.16 Students observe, analyze, and interpret human behaviors, social groupings, and institutions to better understand people and the relationships among individuals and among groups.

The **core content** assessed by this item includes

- Various human needs are met through interaction in and among social groups (e.g., family, sports, political parties).

Formal and Informal Groups

Because people are able to interact easily today with others who live in their communities, as well as with those who live thousands of miles away, the importance of both formal and informal groups in society is increasing. Some examples of formal and informal groups are listed below.

Examples of formal groups:

schools, churches, workplaces, civic organizations, towns, cities

Examples of informal groups:

neighborhoods, friendships, hobby groups, computer-user groups

- a. Describe the characteristics of formal and informal groups.
- b. Explain how formal and informal groups meet the needs of individuals.



SCORING GUIDE

Grade 11 Social Studies

Score	Description
4	Student gives a clear description of characteristics of formal and informal groups and thoroughly explains how each meets the needs of individuals. Response demonstrates an in-depth understanding of social groups.
3	Student generally describes characteristics of formal and informal groups and generally explains how each meets the needs of individuals. Response demonstrates a general understanding of social groups.
2	Student gives a limited description of characteristics of formal and/or informal groups and a limited explanation of how one or both meet the needs of individuals. Understanding is limited.
1	Student minimally describes one of the groups and/or minimally explains how it meets the needs of individuals. Understanding is minimal.
0	Response is totally incorrect or irrelevant.
Blank	No response.

Formal Groups:

Characteristics—hierarchy, structure, stated purpose, written rules/laws, money is often central

Purpose—making government run, collecting money, running the economy, educating citizens, providing social order

Informal Groups:

Characteristics—not hierarchical/more democratic, fluid, casual, more choice in membership

Purpose—having fun, pursuing special interest, relaxing, reducing stress, obtaining emotional support, being social



ANNOTATED STUDENT RESPONSE

Grade 11 Social Studies

Sample 4-Point Response of Student Work

Student Response

Formal groups (such as schools, churches, and cities) seem to have some type of structure or hierarchy. Money is an important part of these groups, and the groups use money in fulfilling some objective. People belong to some type of formal group because of some purpose.

Informal groups (such as neighborhoods and hobby groups) do not need to have a formal structure or specific objective. People do not have to "belong" to informal groups. In many ways, an informal group is the opposite of a formal group.

The purposes formal groups serve include giving some sort of monetary support system or service. Schools educate, churches provide spiritual guidance and help charities, and towns make sure that the community runs smoothly (and has roads, utilities, and sanitation). Communities would not be able to function without formal groups.

Informal groups provide different but important things. They can provide relaxation and reduce stress. People can be involved in fun activities that are not vital to a functioning community. They can also provide emotional support. Informal groups are what help keep people in good social health and well being.

← Student provides a clear description of the characteristics of formal and informal groups (i.e., formal groups are hierarchical, have a stated purpose, and often require money to fulfill objectives; informal groups are often unstructured, without a specific objective, and allow for fluid membership).

← Student thoroughly explains how formal and informal groups meet the needs of individuals (i.e., formal groups provide financial support or some type of service and are integral to the effective functioning of communities. Informal groups promote good social health and well-being by providing opportunities to relax, reduce stress, and have fun, and obtain emotional support).

← Overall, the student demonstrates a clear and thorough understanding of the differences between formal and informal groups and of the way formal and informal groups meet the needs of individuals. The response is detailed.



ANNOTATED STUDENT RESPONSE

Grade 11 Social Studies

Sample 4-Point Response of Student Work

Student Response

Because people are able to interact easily today with others who live in their communities, as well as with those who live thousands of miles away, the importance of both formal and informal groups in society is increasing. Some examples of a formal group are schools, churches, workplaces, towns, and cities. Informal groups are neighborhoods, friendships, and hobby groups. The difference between the two is that a formal group is more of an organized group with a leader. People in formal groups are not in these groups for recreational purposes. These groups have much more of an educational or career purpose. Formal groups are probably more scheduled than informal groups. A person has to attend school Monday through Friday, and a person has to go to work, usually Monday through Friday, at certain times. An informal group has more to do with recreation and hobbies. People with the same interests as someone else would most likely be in the same informal group. There is not much of a schedule in an informal group. You don't have to meet someone on a certain day to be his/her friend; you are friends even if you are not next to each other. In an informal group there is not a leader to tell someone what hobbies or friends to have.

Both types of groups meet the needs of the individuals within the group. Formal groups usually provide a specific service or have a specific purpose. In a formal school group, for example, the individual's needs are met educationally. In a formal church group, the individual's religious needs are met. Within these groups, whatever is being taught or preached, in some way directly influences the listener. In informal groups of friendships people listen to each other's problems or go out and have fun. Those needs are very important to a person's self-esteem. In an informal neighborhood group people can protect each other, or watch over their neighbors' houses while someone is out of town. Informal groups are the most important when it comes to fulfilling a person's needs.

← Student provides a clear description of the characteristics of formal and informal groups (i.e., formal groups are organized, scheduled, have leadership, and are often centered around career and/or education; informal groups often focus on recreation or hobbies, are less scheduled than formal groups, and do not have formal leaders).

← Student uses specific examples to thoroughly explain how formal and informal groups meet the needs of individuals (i.e., formal groups provide specific services or have a specific purpose: schools meet the educational needs of individuals and church groups meet the religious needs of individuals; members of an informal friendship group can contribute to each other's self-esteem by having fun together and listening to each other's problems; members of a neighborhood can help protect each other by watching over the homes of others while they are out of town).

Overall, the student demonstrates a clear and thorough understanding of the differences between formal and informal groups and of the way formal and informal groups meet the needs of individuals.



ANNOTATED STUDENT RESPONSE

Grade 11 Social Studies

Sample 3-Point Response of Student Work

Student Response

A formal group is something you would think of as normally having a set bunch of rules and regulations and often having some sort of authority figure that is in charge. An informal group probably would not have a set of rules or an authority figure, being a much looser organization.

Formal groups often have a set purpose. Schools are there to educate, workplaces have a job to get done. Formal groups run our government and help keep us safe. Informal groups are mostly for recreational or emotional purposes. Informal groups help people meet their need for acceptance into a group, and can also help people to relax and manage stress.

← Student provides a general description of the characteristics of formal and informal groups (i.e., formal groups have rules and regulations and an authority figure; an informal group does not have an authority figure and is a much looser organization).

← Student generally explains how formal and informal groups meet the needs of individuals (i.e., formal groups have a specific purpose, such as educating, getting a job done, running the government, and maintaining safety; informal groups are recreational and/or serve emotional and social needs).

Overall, the student demonstrates a general understanding of the differences between formal and informal groups and of the way formal and informal groups meet the needs of individuals.



ANNOTATED STUDENT RESPONSE

Grade 11 Social Studies

Sample 2-Point Response of Student Work

Student Response

Formal and informal groups are important in todays society. Formal groups are characterized as groups with a set leader who makes discisions for the whole such as schools, churches, workplaces, civic organizations, town, and cities. Informal group are characterized as a group of people together without a leader, all are equal such as neighborhoods, friendships, bobby-groups, and computer-user groups. The purpose of formal groups is to accomplish something, the group under the leader works together for a common goal. On the other hand informal groups have no real purpose other than companionship and company.



Student provides a limited description of the characteristics of formal and informal groups (i.e., formal groups have a leader who makes decisions; informal groups do not have leaders and allow for equality among group members).



Student provides a limited explanation of how formal and informal groups meet the needs of individuals (i.e., formal groups work toward a common goal; informal groups provide companionship).

Overall, the student demonstrates a limited understanding of the differences between formal and informal groups and of the way that formal and informal groups meet the needs of individuals.

Sample 1-Point Response of Student Work

Student Response

Characteristics of formal and informal groups are a few. Most are social involvement with a group and community. It is also out of home involvements. The purpose for formal groups is maintain (establish) the community. Informal is mostly personal preferences.



Student attempts to identify characteristics and distinguish between formal and informal groups, but the information provided is vague.



Student minimally explains how formal groups meet the needs of individuals (i.e., establish and maintain community). Student attempts to explain how informal groups meet the needs of individuals, but the attempt is vague.

Overall, the student demonstrates minimal understanding of the differences between formal and informal groups and of the way formal and informal groups meet the needs of individuals.



INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Grade 11 Social Studies

The open-response item “**Formal and Informal Groups**” assesses (1) students’ understanding of the different functions social groups and institutions play in their lives, and (2) students’ ability to distinguish between and critically think about the different types of social groups and institutions. The instructional strategies below present ideas for helping students explore and master these concepts.

Have students work individually, in pairs, in small groups, and/or as a class to complete any or all of the following activities:

- Study and diagram the organizational structure of a local city. Present your findings to the class or school.
- Survey various student groups on campus (e.g., academic groups, sports groups, support groups, etc.) about the needs that they serve. Chart the results. Which groups are most important to students and why?
- Compare the organizational structure of two organizations (e.g., a school and a local business).
- Conduct an ethnography of a formal or informal group and present findings to the class or school.
- Discuss personal experiences in various social groups, clubs, and institutions.
- Research the impact of computers and other types of technology on social groups and institutions.
- Create a documentary video on a new type of informal group (e.g., snowboarders or mountain bikers).
- Identify a need or interest among students on campus. Organize a group to meet this need or interest. What degree of structure will the group have?
- Volunteer for a local group or organization and keep a journal of your experiences (e.g., neighborhood watch, Students Against Drunk Drivers, Girl Scouts).
- Create a website that will attract a specialized group of people.